

Message Text

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BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SY

SUBJ: BAATH PARTY ANNOUNCES ELECTION NEW REGIONAL COMMAND

1. DAMASCUS PRESS APRIL 15 ANNOUNCED NAMES OF BAATH
PARTY REGIONAL COMMAND ELECTED BY SIXTH PARTY CONGRESS
APRIL 14. FOLLOWING ARE TWENTY-ONE REGIONAL COMMAND
MEMBERS:

HAFEZ AL-ASAD

ABDALLAH AL-AHMAR

MUHAMMAD JABIR BAJBUJ

ABD AL-HALIM KHADDAM

MUHAMMAD ALI AL-HALABI

GEORGE SADDIQNI

MUHAMMAD HAYDAR

MUSTAPHA TLAS

ABD AL-RAHMAN KHULAYFAWI

ABD AL-GHANI IBRAHIM

FAHMI AL-YUSUFI

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ABDALLAH AL-AHMAD

MUT'IB SHANAN

TAHA KHAYRAT
AHMAD AL-HASAN
MAHMUD HADID
RIF'AT AL-ASAD
ZUHAYR MASHARQAH
YUSUF AL-AS'AD
AHMAD DIYAB
NABIH HASUN

2. LAST SEVEN NAMES ON LIST ARE NEW MEMBERS OF
REGIONAL COMMAND. THEY REPLACE FOLLOWING SEVEN
MEMBERS OF PREVIOUS REGIONAL COMMAND DROPPED DURING
PRESENT ELECTIONS:

ABD AL-KARIM ADI
ASAM AL-NA'IB
NAJI JAMIL
ADIB MILHAM
JABR AL-KAFRI
MAHMUD AYYUBI
AHMAD AL-KHATIB

3. COMMENT: OF SEVEN NEW RC MEMBERS, RIF'AT AL-ASAD
IS MOST OUTSTANDING NAME. HE IS BROTHER OF PRESIDENT
AND COMMANDER OF REPUBLICAN GUARD, AN ELITE MILITARY
FORCE STAFFED PREDOMINATELY BY ALAWIS, CHRISTIANS
AND DRUZE PICKED FOR THEIR LOYALTY TO THE REGIME.
WE UNDERSTAND THAT RIF'AT HAS NOT SERVED IN BAATH
PARTY FOR FULL TEN YEARS, AN ALLEGED PREREQUISITE
FOR ELECTION TO REGIONAL COMMAND. HIS ELEVATION
TO RC HAS REPORTEDLY ANGERED NUMBER OF BAATHIS
CONCERNED WITH PARTY PRINCIPLES AND REGULATIONS.

4. THREE NAMES STAND OUT AMONG SEVEN OLD MEMBERS
NOT ELECTED THIS TIME AROUND. NAJI JAMIL IS
COMMANDER OF AIR FORCE AND DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER;
MAHMUD AL-AYYUBI IS PRESENTLY PRIME MINISTER; AND
AHMAD AL-KHATIB IS PRIME MINISTER OF SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN-
LIBYAN FEDERATION. AYYUBI'S FAILURE TO WIN RE-
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ELECTION MAY PRESAGE HIS REPLACEMENT AS PRIME MINISTER
BY RC MEMBER SUCH AS ABD AL-RAHMAN KHULAYFAWI,
MUHAMMAD ALI HALABI OR MUSTAPHA TLAS (NAMES MOST
FREQUENTLY MENTIONED), BUT THIS NOT CERTAIN. KHATIB
HAS ELEVATED BUT INNOCUOUS POSITION, AND IS NOT
CONSIDERED A POWER WITHIN PARTY CIRCLES. JAMIL'S
FUTURE IS NOT CLEAR. WE UNDERSTAND HE OPENLY OPPOSED
RIF'AT AL-ASAD DURING CONGRESS, YET TRADITIONALLY HE
HAS BEEN CONSIDERED ONE OF REGIME'S INNER CIRCLE.
IT IS TOO SOON TO KNOW WHETHER HIS NONRE-ELECTION

IMPLIES DIMINUATION OF HIS INFLUENCE ON KEY POLICY
DECISIONS. ON THE CONTRARY, IT MAY SIMPLY INDICATE
THAT BAATH REGIONAL COMMAND IS NOT THE ONLY DECISION
MAKING BODY IN ASAD'S SYRIA.
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